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CONTENTS

Contributions to the History of the Niagara Frontier

A FORGOTTEN PRESIDENT

by John Lord O'Brian

THE SCULPTOR OF "THE CENTAUR"

by W. H. Glover

THIS I REMEMBER—I

by Charles S. Illingworth

SLAVERY AND ABOLITION IN BUFFALO NEWSPAPERS

by Hildegard Graf

THE STEAMSHIP "INDIA"

by Erik Heyl

Departments

AS ONE HISTORIAN TO ANOTHER. Movement in Local History—A Busy
Neighbor—Christy J. Buscaglia—Niagara Frontier

HISTORY ALONG THE FRONTIER. Genesee Country Meeting—Erie County
Historical Federation—Warner Museum at Springville—Our
Suburb and Senior—Accessions

BOOKS YOU MAY WANT TO SEE. Occasional Contributions, The Niagara
County Historical Society, *by Julia Boyer-Reinstein*

Slavery and Abolition in Buffalo Newspapers

by Hildegard F. Graf

THERE is evidence in plenty that the people of Buffalo in the early decades of the nineteenth century were aware of the peculiar institution of the south, and the fact that many people believed the institution to be fraught with evils. In the newspapers of the third decade there are numerous short articles telling the stories of negro oppression, stating the opinions of prominent men on the subject of slavery, praising colonization, and denouncing the slave trade.

But the Democratic party papers of the city wrote ardently against antislavery activity or maintained an impressive silence concerning the subject. The *Buffalo Daily Republican*, published for a single year, 1840, wrote:

We, as democrats and as friends to our country, claim no connection with the abolitionists. We do not condemn their motives, but we repudiate their doctrines and concern ourselves nothing about their arrangements.

The attitude of the editors of the *Daily Mercantile Courier and Democratic Economist* is shown in the sarcasm of the following article:

The abolitionists keep up their farce of political action. In Cook County (Illinois), at the late election, out of about 2000 votes, they mustered 37; which is a larger portion than they are able to command in most other places.

The *Buffalo Republic*, a Democratic party paper, begun in 1847, did come out very strongly in favor of the Wilmot Proviso. The editor, Quartus Graves, admitted that there was nothing in the United States Constitution which could hinder the new territories, after becoming states, from making slavery legal. However, he felt that if these territories were trained up to humanity and freedom, when they did enter the Union on a par with the old states, there would be no danger of their departing from freedom, "and taking upon

themselves the deep disgrace of human slavery". Graves concludes that it "is therefore, extreme folly and absurdity to aver that Congress has no power to prohibit the introduction of slavery into the territories." A few months later, the *Republic* printed an article asking for the formation of Wilmot Proviso Associations. The conclusion of this appeal is unusually strong, proving that the Van Buren wing of the Democratic party in New York State was strongly antislavery by 1847:

Freeman of the North! Shall we tamely submit to southern dictation and suffer the victories of the armies of the nation to be turned into triumphs of slavery, and the Constitution violated by the usurpation of a power to create slavery not granted?

In decade 1850-1860 the Democratic party papers practically ignored the slavery issue. In September, 1852, an article in *Rough Notes* heartily denounced the celebration in Syracuse of the anniversary of the rescue of the slave "Jerry" in that city. The editor declines the "flattering" invitation to attend, but proposes as his contribution to the festivities of the day: "The Rescue of Jerry — Standing side by side, in the annals of our country, with Hull's Surrender and Arnold's Treason, it can never be forgotten while a record of villainy exists." In all the available copies of the *Buffalo Evening Post*, in the years 1856 and 1857, there is not one word printed on the subject of slavery.

However, Buffalo on the whole was a Whig city and in the two leading Whig newspapers, the *Commercial-Advertiser* and the *Morning Express*, we can discover a reflection of the beliefs of a majority of the people of Buffalo. They were far from cold to the subject and as the years went on, and the issue grew hotter, they gave it more and more space; but never at any time did they accept outright the antislavery principles of the Liberty Party.

In the *Commercial-Advertiser* during a

[Eighteen]

single month of the year 1835 can be found three accounts of the meetings and work of the American Colonization Society, but there is no direct mention of slavery at all. By 1843, the *Commercial-Advertiser* was willing to devote considerable space to a fairly tolerant account of the activities of the National Liberty Party Convention being held in this city. The day after the convention had disbanded, however, the *Commercial-Advertiser* printed this stinging comment:

The Liberty Party Convention contrasted most unfavorably with the convention of Colored People recently held in this city . . . In wisdom, dignity, order, intellect and eloquence, the Colored Convention was vastly superior to its successor.

During the same month, the editors of the *Commercial-Advertiser* even more definitely stated their abhorrence to anti-slavery principles:

Political abolition, therefore, seems to us all evil, and abating in nothing of our abhorrence of slavery, or of our earnest desire to see it circumscribed within its appointed bounds and finally, we hope, extinguished utterly—we would disclaim all fellowship with those whose fanatical zeal would overthrow the constitution itself, and hazard the safety of the whole social edifice in the attempt to eradicate a single defect.

The Whig *Morning Express*, founded in 1846, carried several articles relating to slavery in its first year. For the next few years, the paper continually denounced the slave trade and praised the colonization movement, but said little or nothing about its feeling toward the political abolitionists or their activities. In 1848, the editors state that “the only effectual remedy (for stopping the slave trade) is to line the coast of Africa with free settlements like Liberia.” In that same year, there was an attempted escape and recapture of some seventy slaves from the District of Columbia, and a subsequent attack on the office of the antislavery *New Era* in Washington. The *Express* published a very bitter denunciation of the incident, concluding with this statement concerning the *New Era*:

[Nineteen]

“This paper is a temperate and judicious one, devoted to the abatement of the *great national curse, slavery*, but using no other weapons than those of argument and reason.” A few days later, aroused further by these incidents, the *Express* prophesied “that a day of fearful reckoning is at hand” and warned slavery and its advocates to beware.

An interesting change in the *Morning Express's* opinion occurred between the years 1846 and 1857. On February 5, 1846, the *Express* published a letter purportedly from Frederick Douglass, just then traveling in Ireland, to William Lloyd Garrison. The *Express* agreed with the *Albany Evening Journal* in refusing to believe that Frederick Douglass might be capable of writing such a letter, because of the evident intelligence of the writer. By January 26, 1857, the viewpoint of the *Express* had changed considerably as can be seen in reading the following announcement:

By reference to an announcement in another column it will be seen that the above gentleman (Douglass) is to lecture on Slavery at Kremlin Hall this evening. Mr. Douglass' fame has become worldwide; his remarkable history, indomitable energy, consistency of conduct and unmistakable genius entitle him to a respectable hearing by those even, who viewing the subject from a different standpoint, are constrained to differ with him on the vital question of human slavery.

Still the *Express* would not support the actions of the Liberty men. The editors declared that they were more fearful for the white southerners than for the colored folk.

The *Buffalo Daily Gazette*, founded in 1842, advocated the renomination of Tyler, who was an anti-Jackson Democrat. In September of 1844 the *Gazette* became an independent paper, following Tyler's refusal to run for office. It published an extremely long contributed article calling for the election of James G. Birney, “the only Presidential candidate who is opposed

to Annexation and Slavery under all circumstances . . . ”, written by a Liberty Party man. The *Gazette* was evidently criticized for publishing such an article, as the next day it came out with an admirable defense of its independence:

It is certain that we can't please everybody in these hot times. If we say a good word in favor of the democrats, we are set down as a 'loco foco'. Because we spoke of the Erie meeting as we thought it deserved, we were saluted with, 'the *Gazette* is turning Whig, eh?' from our democratic friends. And now, because our friend, J.K., a veritable live Liberty man, wishes to be heard, a small communication in the *Commercial* would set us down as not only of that party, but the writer of the offending article! We beg to be excused that honor—it don't [sic] belong to us. People will learn by and by that a little independence in the hearing of all sides is what is most desirable in this city. In this way, truth may be arrived at.

About one month later, the *Gazette* stated: "Our Liberty party friends, having no organ in this section of the country, we have given them a hearing through our columns, in a matter which has been made of public concernment, but in which we, of course, take no particular interest." In the same issue, it published a favorable report of the speech made by James G. Birney, concluding that he spoke "in a very candid, forcible manner, and was listened to with great attention by the audience." We must accept the statement of the *Gazette* that, as a Democratic paper, it had no particular interest in the antislavery cause and that to publish reports of their activities was only a courtesy made possible by its independence in political matters. Although it published Mr. John's resolutions regarding the imprisonment of Torrey, it had preceded them with a definite statement the day before against "slave stealing."

The *Daily National Pilot* was established as an independent paper in 1845 and ran until December, 1846 under the motto "For our country at all times: To approve her when right, and to right her when wrong." Since the *Gazette* had suspended in 1845 the *Pilot* published the news of the Liberty Party. But, like the *Gazette*, this was only a courtesy offered from the safety of its own independence. In an article concerning the acquisition of Texas and the admission of Florida, the editors of the *Pilot* admitted the evil of slavery in the south but concluded that nothing could be done until God should point out the way. They definitely stated that the evil could not be remedied by political action.

We must conclude that the Whig and the independent papers of Buffalo were always willing to give the Liberty party men a hearing in their columns, but at the same time would give no support to their principles; they frequently took the opportunity to criticize them. The Liberty party in this city never had an official organ of its own, but according to an advertisement in the *Gazette*, a general assortment of antislavery tracts, books, and canvass papers, could be had at the bookstore of Messrs. Baldwin and Whitney, No. 270 Main Street, Kremlin Block. It is to be assumed, too, that from time to time broadsides were distributed, particularly preceding elections.

Generally speaking, however, the lukewarm antislavery sentiments, politically considered, of the majority of the people of Buffalo were mirrored in the Whig papers and the ardent anti-abolitionism of the Democrats of the city was revealed in the columns of the Democratic papers of the time.

We study history . . . in order to attain self-knowledge . . . our knowledge that human activity is free has been attained only through our discovery of history . . . The activity by which man builds his own constantly changing historical world is a free activity. There are no forces other than this activity which control it or modify it or compel it to behave in this way or in that, to build one kind of world rather than another. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 315.

Any hit longer than a single was worthy of a detailed description in the papers. It was not until June 21 that the first Buffalo home run of the 1878 season was hit, and what a sensation it was! The Express baseball writer, his "bricklayer" metaphor of the month before now forgotten, penned the following rapturous lines: "Libby (Steve) struck the ball squarely and it went on a bee-line to the left field corner. For a few seconds the crowd did not appreciate the magnitude of the hit. Suddenly it began to realize that something stupendous was taking place. Handkerchiefs waved. The crowd became frantic; the applause, which was the loudest ever heard in Buffalo, lasted for several minutes. As Libby crossed the plate, several ladies threw bouquets which were

caught by the blushing Steve as he took his place on the bench."

In spite of the outstanding success of the Buffalo team on the field, the season did not prove to be a big money maker for its backers, principally because of heavy expenses involved in constructing the new field and grandstand on Rhode Island Street. The annual statement, submitted in November by Treasurer E. R. Spaulding, showed a cash balance of only \$248.94.

On November 21, the directors met and decided to seek admission to the National League, a request that was readily granted. Thus ended Buffalo's first year in organized professional baseball, a year of glory all too long buried in the musty archives of our national pastime.

Samuel Wilkeson, Buffalo, and African Colonization

by Hildegard Graf

THE American Colonization Society antedated all antislavery organizations. It was founded in 1817, in Richmond, Virginia, under the leadership of Henry Clay. The object of the society was to transport manumitted slaves to Liberia, on the west coast of Africa. Only free negroes were to be allowed to migrate. This movement seemed to find great favor in the western New York area. The people who advocated it claimed that it was the only hope of the free negro. They believed that he could build unhampered his own government, schools, and business in Liberia, and they quite sincerely argued that the free negro owed something to his benighted brethren still in pagan darkness; by the establishment of a free negro government on the coast, he could exert a missionary influence upon the natives. The claim of the colonizationists that the free negro would be better off in Africa was justified by the strong dis-

crimination against him both in the north and the south. There were "Black Laws" of varying degrees of rigor in every free state, segregating them as an inferior class under grave social, civil and political disabilities. However, the Colonization Society was never able to secure the sympathy of the various antislavery societies of the country and was unable to gain the confidence of the colored people to any great extent. The Society did have a strong influence in Congress and several times attempted to use it.

Daniel Webster left a colonization meeting in Boston in 1825 with the remark: "Gentlemen, I will have nothing more to do with the meeting for I am satisfied it is merely a plan of the slaveholders to get rid of the free negroes." Frothingham, biographer of abolitionist Gerrit Smith, writes: "The intelligent blacks saw through it. Honest men of the south made no secret of its character. Its founders in

[Thirty-five]

plain language avowed the contempt for the free blacks on which the society was based." Samuel Ringgold Ward, writing of the formation of an antislavery society, states: "Having been abused, and befooled, and slandered, disparaged, ridiculed, and traduced, by the Colonizationists, we could not but look on, first, with very great distrust any persons stepping forward with schemes professedly for our own good." Wherever the negroes had enjoyed freedom in the North, they did not easily embrace the idea of expatriating themselves, which was natural; the southern negroes were more easily influenced by the colonization society members.

A key to the feelings of the colored citizens of Buffalo on the subject of colonization is found in their celebration of the emancipation of the British West Indies on August 4, 1840. One of the formal toasts proposed at that meeting was: "To the *hydra-headed monster*, Colonization, and the later Black Law of Maryland: may they become paralyzed and sink into oblivion." One of the highlights of that session was the reading of the Declaration of the American Anti-Slavery Society. There is no doubt that the attitude of the Buffalo colored citizens was typical. But it is difficult to believe that all promoters of the scheme held the free black in contempt, or that the majority of the colonization members were not sincere in their efforts to better the condition of the free negro, when we know that two leading Buffalonians, the Hon. Samuel Wilkeson, Sr. and the Hon. Millard Fillmore, were advocates of colonization.

Samuel Wilkeson, Sr., pioneer Buffalonian, was one of the leaders of the men who attempted to avert by means of the colonization movement the crisis they foresaw. Samuel Wilkeson was born June 1, 1781 at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, of Irish immigrant parents. He resided for a time at Youngstown, Ohio, and then moved to Westfield, New York, where he engaged in boat

building and the lake trade. He fought in the War of 1812, at Buffalo. The city was burned, but Wilkeson was one of those convinced of the brilliant future for a city located on such a site. In 1814, he removed from Westfield to Buffalo and became one of the pioneers in the developing of the "new Buffalo." In 1820, in order to secure a loan from New York State to develop the city's harbor at the mouth of Buffalo Creek, Wilkeson, with two others, pledged property to the value of \$24,000. When the superintendent of the job turned out to be incompetent, Wilkeson, without any training, took it over. The completed harbor was sufficient to bring the western terminus of the Erie Canal to Buffalo.

In 1821 Wilkeson was appointed first judge of common pleas of Erie County. In 1824 he was elected state senator and in 1836 he was elected the second mayor of the city of Buffalo. At this time Wilkeson interested himself in the work of the American Colonization Society. A letter from Judge Wilkeson to Lewis Sheridan, a very successful free negro farmer of North Carolina and himself owner of nineteen slaves, proves that Wilkeson, at least, had the welfare of the free negro at heart and was honestly trying to find some way to solve the difficult situation. Wilkeson proposed that Sheridan be one of ten men to organize a ship line between the United States and Liberia to be turned over to free negroes in order to give them encouragement in their mercantile ambitions.

Wilkeson's attitude toward slavery is best summarized in a "biographical notice" written by his son, Samuel Wilkeson, Jr.:

His interest in politics and his conscientiousness and humanity carried him earnestly into the discussion of the problems of the American slavery. The tidal wave of abolition was forming. He opposed it. He felt that if the doctrine of unconditional and immediate emancipation

[Thirty-six]

of the slaves should obtain, the union of the states would be broken, the negroes in the south would be exterminated by the whites, and an armed struggle for the control of the Federal government would ensue between the North and the South. To save the Union and to save the South he favored a system of gradual and compensated emancipation. Fearing that a system of slavery could not and would not tolerate the presence of free negroes, he advocated the colonization of the blacks on the west coast of Africa. The control of the American Colonization Society was surrendered to him. He removed to Washington, the headquarters of the Society, and for two years edited its organ, the "African Repository", governed the colony of Liberia, instituted commerce with it from the ports of Baltimore and Philadelphia, gathered colonists wherever he could in the South and shipped them to the new Republic.

And, indeed, when Wilkeson was invited by the Board of Managers in 1838 to become the General Agent for the society, he was made virtual dictator of the society's affairs. It was in that year that the Society seemed to have reached a very low point in its career. It probably seemed like a hopeless task which confronted him, but for two years Samuel Wilkeson labored unceasingly to put the society back on a strong financial basis and in a position of real usefulness. In December, 1838, Wilkeson made a report to the managers which described the situation of the colonizationists and manifested an optimistic spirit. He infused new life into the movement. During his two years in Washington, he became an ardent anti-abolitionist.

Upon the death of Samuel Wilkeson in 1848, the Reverend John C. Lord, pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church, in the

flowery speech common to the preachers of the day, presented a wonderful eulogy which emphasized Wilkeson's work with the Colonization Society. Because Buffalo was predominantly a Whig city, and because men like the Reverend Mr. Lord, leading preacher in the city, supported the cause, it is quite possible that the majority of Buffalonians were of the same opinion.

In 1852 a book by W. L. G. Smith was published by George H. Derby Company of Buffalo, entitled *Life at the South* or "Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is", "Being Narrative Scenes, and Incidents in the Real Life of the Lowly". This book was dedicated to the memory of Henry Clay, "the Advocate of the American Colonization Society and Friend of the Constitution of his Country." The object of the author was to attempt to prove that the delicate question of slavery should not be brought up to "hazard the invaluable blessings which every person in the country, whether bond or free, daily enjoys under it." Smith, a Buffalonian, had a clear perception of the difficult situation and the danger presented to the Union.

The colonization movement was evidently justified in the minds of the majority of Buffalonians by the apparently hopeless degradation of the blacks who by dint of hard honest toil or the kindness of a southern master had won their freedom. That the Buffalonians took the conservative path and looked to the perpetuity of the Union is a fact of which we now can be justly proud.

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

June 26-July 11—Buffalo Baseball History

August—Opening of History of Erie County Agriculture (permanent)

September—Miniature Victorian Rooms

September—Opening of Dart Grain Elevator Exhibit (permanent)

[Thirty-seven]

The Underground Railroad in Erie County

by Hildegard Graf

THE northern states were honeycombed with avenues of escape for slaves who had the ambition to attempt a flight to freedom. The Fugitive Slave Law provided a thousand dollar fine and imprisonment for anyone who was caught giving help to the unfortunate passengers. The great necessity for secrecy imposed by the threat of these penalties has made it impossible to obtain extensive knowledge of local activity on this episode in our history.

It may be that, during the War of 1812, some Southern soldiers who came north to help defend Buffalo and other points along the border brought some of their Negro servants with them. These slaves, returning home, could have told their fellows of the country far up north, named Canada, in which all men were free. However it was, Canada became the goal of those Negroes with initiative who wished to escape the fetters that held them in bondage.

In all probability, the Underground Railroad system began to work to a slight degree in Buffalo soon after the War of 1812. But the Railroad was not really organized with established routes and regular conductors until after 1830. The first record of activity in this locality is in 1838 when two sleighloads of fugitives who had been forwarded from Ohio were brought to Buffalo, which became one of the main termini of the Underground Railroad because of its proximity to Canada. Routes leading through central New York, western Pennsylvania, and eastern Ohio, converged at Buffalo and Black Rock. Siebert, the principal narrator of the system, states that two routes in southwestern New York State led to Buffalo. One route hugged the shore of Lake Erie and came to this city by way of Westfield and Fredonia. The other route came on a more direct course straight from Jamestown

through Pontiac and Orchard Park. There must, of necessity, have been a great many "stations" in Erie County; because the fugitives could be moved safely only during the night and in the days of the horse and wagon, thirty miles was about the maximum distance that could be covered in that time.

The ferry from Buffalo to Canada inevitably became one of the most vital parts of the entire system. Perhaps the most prominent figure in the history of the movement in western New York is Dr. Eber M. Pettit of Fredonia. His home in that town was a station on the lake shore line from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Buffalo. He has written an interesting narrative of his experiences during those years. Dr. Pettit never suffered any of the severe penalties of the Fugitive Slave Law, but Willard McKinstry, a close friend, states that Pettit often said that if the law had been enforced against him, he would have been bankrupt many times over.

Dr. Pettit's name stands out in the fog which surrounds the working of the Railroad because of his account, but we can assume that there were numerous other "conductors" on the lines through western New York, who were, perhaps, just as active as Pettit. Siebert lists the Erie County Agents as: Aldrich, Gideon Barker, Hon. William Haywood, George Jonson, Deacon Henry Moore, and Williams. Barker, Jonson, Moore, and Williams were recognized as active anti-slavery men. It is probable, therefore, that the homes of most of the well known anti-slavery men were "stations".

In Orchard Park, New York, and throughout the county there was a large settlement of Quakers. Dr. Benjamin Baker, late of the faculty of the University of Buffalo, related that many of these

[Sixty-nine]

Friends were active agents of the Underground Railroad. The home in which he lived, situated at the corner of Quaker and Baker Roads, Orchard Park, at that time owned by his grandfather, Benjamin Baker, was a "station". Fugitives were brought by the wagon load from Warsaw, New York (the central New York line from Philadelphia through Elmira), or from Pontiac (the line running through western Pennsylvania from Pittsburgh and Jamestown), and left at this station in Orchard Park. Dr. Baker's great-aunts told him how they, as children, were sent to a room in the farthest corner of the house while the Negroes were unloaded and put in a room in the cellar to spend the day. The next night, the Negroes would be transported by Benjamin Baker to one of the stations in Buffalo or Williamsville. One of these stations, Dr. Baker recalled, was the home of Cheesham Dodge on Court Street where the old Shea's Court Street Theater stood and the mechanized parking garage now stands. At other times, the story goes, Benjamin Baker would start out with a wagonload of "grain" in the wintertime and drive out across the lake, at Woodlawn beach, to Windmill Point in Canada. The peculiar thing about these trips is that he would come back with the grain underground.

It was necessary, however, to have hiding places in Buffalo, where Negroes could be concealed to await a favorable opportunity to steal across the river. Some of Buffalo's first families used their homes and gave their services to get the fleeing Negro safely through the last stage of his long journey. Mr. Robert W. Bingham, former Director of the Buffalo Historical Society, has said that Miss Maria Love told him her father, Thomas C. Love, was an active agent of the railroad. The Love family is a pioneer Buffalo family and Thomas C. Love served as a New York State Representative in Congress in the years 1835 to 1837. Mr. Love's feeling toward the South and its peculiar institu-

tion can readily be discerned in his letters to his wife during the debate in the House of Representatives over the "gag rule". On February 7, 1837, he wrote: "The whole South have acted like madmen and fools and have been dealing for two days in the most unnatural abuse of the whole North. . . . I am now satisfied, if I before had doubt, that this Union cannot much longer be preserved, and with such feelings and principles as I have heard expressed within the last three days on this floor, I have to say it ought not to be continued — the South are tired of all decency and I am more than willing they should try the experiment of a government by themselves." In 1843, Thomas C. Love was elected vice-president of the Erie County Anti-Slavery Society so he must have come all the way over to the side of the anti-slavery men.

Myrtilla C. Fosdick, in her book *When Buffalo Was Young*, tells several stories from her husband, Frank S. Fosdick, whose father was an agent on the Railroad. This was John Spencer Fosdick, a teacher, who was also the grandfather of the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick of New York City. Mrs. Fosdick writes that "among the much valued heirlooms of a certain Buffalo family (presumably the Fosdick family) is a pair of old mittens, which are a relic of the days when the Underground Railroad flourished."

It has been claimed recently that the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church was used to house fugitives until a favorable hour came to ferry them across the river.

This is quite possible because the church was at that time a great center of activity of the Negro citizens of Buffalo. There are two other homes which have been definitely identified as stations. One was the Morris Butler home at the corner of Utica Street and Linwood Avenue, which was torn down in 1927. In this house there were two secret chambers on each side of the front door, which were accessible only from the cellar. There is a story of a

Negro who was brought in great haste to the Butler home and concealed in one of these small closets. His pursuers were so suspicious that no one of the household dared go near the closet for several hours to give him food or drink. When Mr. Butler was at last able to open the closet, he found the Negro had died.

The other known station was on Niagara Street near Ferry Street. Merton Wilner states that Negroes who got to Buffalo by themselves usually made their way to the rear door of the American Hotel where, in the early hours of the morning, an employee of the hotel, Samuel Murray (a free Negro) gave them something to eat and directed them to the river front. There were probably several other stations of which we shall never hear.

Mrs. Fosdick writes that the most ingenious and daring of the Buffalo conductors was a German named Carl Zimmer, who had various clever ways of disguising the Negro fugitives in order to get them over the river under the very eyes of their pursuers. The Friends of the county used to attire the male fugitives in the gray gowns and bonnets of Quaker women and take them to the ferry.

There are numerous stories of the daring of the agents. The "nigger chasers" and federal officers were diligent, but it is evident that many of the people of the community supported the Underground agents and few the slave hunters. William Wells Brown was an active anti-slavery man of this locality. He was a fugitive slave, well-educated, and interested not only in anti-slavery, but in temperance reform, women's suffrage, and prison reform as well. He was associated with the most ardent abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. For several years he smuggled fugitives in a steamer that plied between Cleveland and Buffalo, no doubt without

the active consent of his employers. Another agent ultimately ferried them across the river to Canada. In 1842 sixty-nine fugitives took this route. In his book, *The Black Man*, Brown tells of how a valuable slave, painted white and disguised as a woman, escaped from the closely watched house of a Cleveland abolitionist to his boat. He writes: "The next morning, the fugitive, dressed in his plantation suit, bade farewell to his native land, crossed the Niagara River, and took up his abode in Canada." Brown later lectured on behalf of his enslaved countrymen.

Samuel Ringgold Ward tells several interesting stories of fugitive slaves in this district, the last lap of their journey. One Negro met his master face to face at the Niagara River. The master gave chase. The Negro gained the Suspension Bridge and the tollkeeper stood by and cheered him on. He gained the Canadian end of the bridge before his master caught up with him. Ward also writes of a poor Negro who was obliged to travel in the winter. "Liberty was before him and for it he could defy the frost." The Negro wrapped himself around the stove on the ferry and what delighted Ward was that "everybody in the office seemed quite content that he should occupy what he had discovered and appropriated." The ferryman said: "When a darky comes to this ferry from slavery, I guess he'll get across, shilling or no shilling, money or no money."

The Underground Railroad system was much more successful in helping the Negro than was the African Colonization scheme. From 1816 to 1857, a period of forty years, 9,502 immigrants went to Africa, of whom 3,676 were born free, 326 purchased their own liberty, and 5,500 were emancipated on condition of being sent to Africa. It is estimated between 30,000 and 40,000 escaped to Canada.

